

Implementation of the New Policy

1 Indian Associations and Consultation

Successful implementation of the new policy would require the further development of a close working relationship with the Indian community. This was made abundantly clear in the proposals set forth by the National Indian Brotherhood at the national meeting to consult on revising the Indian Act. Their brief succinctly identified the needs at that time and offers a basis for discussing the means of adaptation to the new policy.

To this end the Government proposes to invite the executives of the National Indian Brotherhood and the various provincial associations to discuss the role they might play in the implementation of the new policy, and the financial resources they may require. The Government recognizes their need for independent advice, especially on legal matters. The Government also recognizes that the discussions will place a heavy burden on Indian leaders during the adjustment period. Special arrangements will have to be made so that they may take the time needed to meet and discuss all aspects of the new policy and its implementation.

Needs and conditions vary greatly from province to province. Since the adjustments would be different in each case, the bulk of the negotiations would likely be with the provincial bodies, regional groups and the bands themselves. There are those matters which are of concern to all, and the National Indian Brotherhood would be asked to act in liaison with the various provincial associations and with the federal departments which would have ongoing responsibilities.

The Government proposes to ask that the associations act as the principal agencies through which consultation and negotiations would be conducted, but each band would be consulted about gaining ownership of its land holdings. Bands would be asked to designate the association through which their broad interests would be represented.

2 Transitional Period

The Government hopes to have the bulk of the policy in effect within five years and believes that the necessary financial and other arrangements can be concluded so that Indians will have full access to provincial services within that time. It will seek an immediate start to the many discussions that will need to be held with the provinces and with representatives of the Indian people.

The role of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in serving the Indian people would be phased out as arrangements with the provinces were completed and remaining Federal Government responsibilities transferred to other departments.

The Commissioner will be appointed soon and instructed to get on with his work.

Steps would be taken in consultation with representatives of the Indian people to transfer control of land to them. Because of the need to consult over five hundred bands the process would take some time.

A policy can never provide the ultimate solutions to all problems. A policy can achieve no more than is desired by the people it is intended to serve. The essential feature of the Government's proposed new policy for Indians is that it acknowledges that truth by recognizing the central and essential role of the Indian people in solving their own problems. It will provide, for the first time, a non-discriminatory framework within which, in an atmosphere of freedom, the Indian people could, with other Canadians, work out their own destiny.